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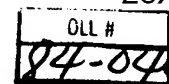
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DEPARTMENT PLEASE PASS TO S/SE AMBASSADOR STONE AND
TO H FOR CONGRESSMAN SOLARZ

E.O. 12356: DECL: OADR
TAGS: PREL, NU, ES, CO
SUBJECT: PRESIDENT BETANCUR ON NEGOTIATING WITH
- THE SANDINISTAS

1. CONFIDENTIAL - ENTIRE TEXT.

2. IN THE COURSE OF AN HOUR-AND-A-HALF MEETING
THE EVENING OF JANUARY 18, PRESIDENT BETANCUR
TOLD CODEL SOLARZ AND THE AMBASSADOR THE
FOLLOWING CONCERNING COMING NEGOTIATIONS WITH THE
GRN PURSUANT TO THE FINAL RESOLUTION TAKEN BY
THE CONTADORA MEETING IN PANAMA ON JANUARY 8.

3. CONGRESSMAN SOLARZ ASKED IF IMPLEMENTATION OF
THE SECURITY PROVISIONS ENVISIONED BY THE PANAMA
CONTADORA AGREEMENT WERE CONTINGENT ON ACCEPTANCE
OF DEMOCRACY AND DEMOCRATIC PLURALISM BY ALL THE
COUNTRIES IN CENTRAL AMERICA. BETANCUR SAID YES,
THAT A "DEMOCRATIC OPENING" IN ALL THE CENTRAL
AMERICAN COUNTRIES IS "BASIC." HE SAID HE WAS
WORKING TO SPEED-UP THE PROCESS OF DEMOCRATIZATION,
INCLUDING IN GUATEMALA AND PANAMA. NICARAGUA, HE SAID,
HAS ANNOUNCED ELECTIONS WHICH ORIGINALLY WERE SET
FOR 1986, THEN LATE 1985, NOW EARLY 1985, AND MIGHT
BE MOVED UP TO LATE THIS YEAR.

4. SOLARZ ASKED IF THE GRN IS REALLY COMMITTED TO
DEMOCRATIC PLURALISM AND OBSERVED THAT, WHEN HE SPOKE
WITH DANIEL ORTEGA A YEAR AGO, ORTEGA HAD CONDITIONED
POLITICAL PARTIES' PARTICIPATION IN ELECTIONS ON THE
PARTIES' ACCEPTANCE OF THE SANDINISTA REVOLUTION AND
COMMITMENT TO FUNCTION ONLY WITHIN ITS FRAMEWORK.
THIS, SOLARZ SAID, DID NOT SOUND LIKE PLURALISM
AS THE U.S. AND COLOMBIA UNDERSTAND IT.
BETANCUR REPLIED THAT THERE HAS BEEN A CHANGE IN THE
GRN ON THIS POINT. THERE IS A DIFFERENCE, HE SAID,
BETWEEN WHAT DANIEL ORTEGA BELIEVES DEEP IN HIS HEART
AND WHAT HE FEELS HE REALISTICALLY WILL HAVE TO DO.
ORTEGA WOULD LIKE THE WHOLE POLITICAL PROCESS TO TAKE

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OFF FROM THE SANDINISTA REVOLUTION.

NOT ALL THE OTHER COMANDANTES, BETANCUR AVERRED, BELIEVE THIS IS ESSENTIAL, HOWEVER. MANY THINK THE FMLN WILL WIN ANY ELECTION HELD IN NICARAGUA SO GREATER RISKS CAN BE TAKEN. BETANCUR WENT ON TO SAY THAT, SO SURE IS THE FMLN THAT IT WOULD WIN THAT ORTEGA HAD TOLD HIM THAT THE JUNTA HAS ALREADY WITHDRAWN THE CONDITION THAT ELECTIONS IN NICARAGUA WOULD HAVE TO TAKE PLACE WITHIN THE FRAMEWORK OF THE SANDINISTA REVOLUTION, AS ORTEGA HAD PREVIOUSLY TOLD SOLARZ.

5. SOLARZ ASKED BETANCUR TO CONFIRM THAT THE GRN'S POSITION HAD REALLY CHANGED, THAT IT IS NOW WILLING TO HOLD FREE ELECTIONS. BETANCUR REPEATED THAT IT WAS. SOLARZ REMARKED THAT HE THOUGHT IT WOULD BE DIFFICULT FOR THE GRN TO ACCEPT THE BASIC CHANGES IN NICARAGUA'S PRESENT POLITICAL SYSTEM NECESSARY FOR FREE ELECTIONS. BETANCUR SAID ONE MUST HAVE FAITH, THAT "FAITH IS BELIEF IN WHAT WE DON'T BELIEVE IN." HE SAID HE IS TAKING SMALL STEPS TO FORCE THE GRN FORWARD TOWARD FREE ELECTIONS, BIT BY BIT. HE SAID MEXICO AND COLOMBIA HAD OFFERED TO HELP NICARAGUA PERFECT ITS ELECTORAL PROCESS. BUT, HE ADDED, IT IS ALWAYS POSSIBLE THAT THE GRN WILL DECIDE NOT TO HOLD ELECTIONS AT ALL.

6. BETANCUR STATED THAT HE HAD URGED THE GRN TO HOLD ELECTIONS THIS YEAR. HE HAD ASKED THE GRN WHAT IT FEARED FROM ELECTIONS IT FELT CONFIDENT OF WINNING. HE SAID THE REPLY HAD BEEN THAT THE GRN FEARED ITS RADICAL STRUCTURE WOULD HAVE TO BE ALTERED IF THERE WERE TO BE FREE ELECTIONS. THEY FEARED THE PLAY OF POLITICAL PARTIES, A FREE PRESS, ACTIVITY BY THE CHURCH, BUSINESSMEN, AND SO ON; PROBLEMS, BETANCUR SAID WITH A SMILE, THE GRN DOES NOT FACE NOW.

7. SOLARZ ASKED IF IMPLEMENTATION OF THE JANUARY 8 PANAMA CONTADORA AGREEMENT IS ONE WHOLE PACKAGE OR CAN IT BE DIVIDED INTO SEPARATE PARTS. BETANCUR RESPONDED THAT IT IS ONE PACKAGE WITH SEPARATE COMPARTMENTS. THERE ARE GLOBAL AND THERE ARE BILATERAL PRINCIPLES TO BE FULFILLED. AS TO THE LATTER, THE CONTADORA COUNTRIES HAVE SET SOME DATES FOR COMPLETION OF SPECIFIC STEPS AND ARE PUSHING FOR ADHERENCE TO THEM. BETANCUR SAID HE IS ON THE PHONE PRODDING HIS CONTADORA COLLEAGUES CONSTANTLY

8. SOLARZ EXPRESSED MISTRUST OF THE GRN AND

WONDERED IF THERE IS ANY BASIS FOR A REAL AGREEMENT BETWEEN HONDURAS OR EL SALVADOR AND NICARAGUA. BETANCUR RESPONDED THAT IN CENTRAL AMERICA NOBODY BELIEVES IN ANYTHING, NOT IN THE CONTADORA PROCESS, NOT IN THE U.S. OR IN THE USSR. HONDURAS, IN PARTICULAR, HE SAID, DEPENDS COMPLETELY ON THE U.S. -- ITS ECONOMY, ITS DEFENSE, EVERYTHING. HE SAID GENERAL ALVAREZ IS BLINDLY PRO-U.S., BUT ADMITTED HONDURAS IS A SPECIAL CASE. BETANCUR SAID THAT THE GRN KNOWS THIS AND THAT THEREFORE NICARAGUA WILL AGREE NOT TO AID THE GUERRILLAS IN EL SALVADOR AND WILL LEAVE COSTA RICA ALONE IF HONDURAS WILL LEAVE NICARAGUA ALONE. BETANCUR SAID HONDURAS STRIKES AGAINST NICARAGUA IN ORDER TO JUSTIFY U.S. ASSISTANCE. NICARAGUA RESPONDS IN KIND, AND HONDURAS FEELS MORE JUSTIFIED IN REQUESTING U.S. ASSISTANCE, AND SO ON. THE CONTADORA FOUR REGARD THE NICARAGUA/HONDURAS BORDER AS CRITICAL. ARRANGEMENTS MUST BE MADE FOR IT TO BE CAREFULLY MONITORED. DITTO WITH THE GULF OF FONSECA.

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9. SOLARZ ASKED IF THE JANUARY 8 CONTADORA AGREEMENT REQUIRES A DIALOGUE WITHIN EACH CENTRAL AMERICAN COUNTRY, ASKING ESPECIALLY ABOUT NICARAGUA. BETANCUR SAID, IN PRINCIPLE, YES, BUT DANIEL ORTEGA BELIEVES IT WOULD BE VERY DIFFICULT TO DIALOGUE WITH SOME OF THE NICARAGUAN OPPOSITION GROUPS. BETANCUR SAID HE URGED ORTEGA TO BEGIN BY ESTABLISHING A DIALOGUE WITH SOME OPPOSITION GROUPS -- WITH THOSE WITH WHOM IT IS POSSIBLE. BETANCUR HOPES THAT FROM SUCH A BEGINNING A MORE EXTENSIVE DIALOGUE CAN BE DEVELOPED STEP BY STEP. HE IS STILL NOT SURE SUCH A DIALOGUE WILL EVER COME ABOUT, HOWEVER.

10. SOLARZ AGAIN ASKED WHY THE SANDINISTA LEADERS WOULD AGREE NOW TO ACCEPT DEMOCRACY AND DEMOCRATIC PLURALISM. BETANCUR REPLIED WITH A BIBLICAL PARABLE. CHRIST AND HIS DISCIPLES CAME UPON A DEAD DOG. THE DISCIPLES COMPLAINED OF ITS STINK, BUT CHRIST SAID IT HAD A FINE SET OF TEETH. LIKEWISE, QUOTH BETANCUR, THE U.S. INVASION OF GRENADA GAVE OFF AN UNPLEASANT SMELL, BUT HAD NICE TEETH. GRENADA HAS BEEN A DISSUASIVE INFLUENCE FOR CUBA VIS A VIS NICARAGUA. BETANCUR SAID CASTRO HAS TOLD THE GRN HE COULD NOT HELP IT IF THE U.S. ATTACKED NICARAGUA, AND THIS IDEA HAS IMPRESSED THE GRN TO SOME EXTENT. THE U.S. ACTION IN GRENADA WITHOUT A DOUBT HAD MORE IMPACT ON NICARAGUA THAN HAS U.S. ASSISTANCE TO THE CONTRAS. U.S. SUPPORT FOR THE CONTRAS STRENGTHENS THE SANDINISTAS BY UNITING THE COUNTRY FOR DEFENSE AGAINST WHAT IS SEEN AS NORTH AMERICAN AGGRESSION. BETANCUR TERMED U.S. NAVAL MANEUVERS IN THE CARIBBEAN "AN ABSURDITY." HE DENIED THAT THE CONTRAS MAKE THE GRN MORE FLEXIBLE.

11. BETANCUR SAID THAT THE GUERRILLAS IN EL SALVADOR ("SUBJECTIVE AGENTS") REQUIRE ESPECIAL "SUBJECTIVE TREATMENT." THEY SHOULD PARTICIPATE IN NATIONAL ELECTIONS AND PERHAPS EVEN IN TRANSITION GOVERNMENT ARRANGING THE ELECTIONS -- NOT WITH DECISIVE INFLUENCE, BUT WITH REPRESENTATION. IF THEY DO NOT, THE ELECTIONS BECOME A FARCE. BY THE SAME TOKEN, IN NICARAGUA THE SANDINISTAS ARE "SUBJECTIVE AGENTS" AND REQUIRE SPECIAL "SUBJECTIVE" ATTENTION. BUT IN BOTH COUNTRIES THE "OBJECTIVE" ECONOMIC AND SOCIAL CONDITIONS NEED ATTENTION, SUCH AS THE PROVISION OF INFRASTRUCTURE, SCHOOLS, ROADS, WATER SUPPLY. THIS THE KISSINGER REPORT IGNORES, SAID BETANCUR. IF THE U.S. WERE TO PROVIDE INFRASTRUCTURE DIRECTLY TO THE NICARAGUAN PEOPLE, THEIR SUPPORT FOR THE SANDINISTA REGIME WOULD WANE, BETANCUR CONTENDED.

12. THE OTHER ASPECTS OF BETANCUR'S MEETING WITH CODEL SOLARZ, DEALING WITH BETANCUR'S COMMENTS ON OTHER COUNTRIES IN CENTRAL AND SOUTH AMERICA, WILL BE REPORTED SEPTEL.
WATSON

END OF MESSAGE

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